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# NO MEANS NO

***Sophie Kromholz writes about her experience at a recent pro-equality event.***

I teach in a small university town. Although my background is in Art History, I find myself involved in a wide variety of other fields at the small Liberal Arts program that I work at.

I was delighted when I received an e-mail requesting I speak about gender and feminism at a pro-equality demonstration. My students had put me forward, which means the world to me. The event itself was cheerful. Students from different departments gathered with banners and students from the conservatory played joyful drums. We marched across the bridge to the market square where I spoke. The gist of the talk was about being good to each other.

What I can't help but think of now, when I look back at the march, is the young man that asked me for a copy of my speech afterwards. The sound had been iffy and he said he hadn't been able to hear me clearly. I'd ended up speaking through a megaphone and mic combo. So I said I'd email a copy. He sent me an email back and asked me out. I declined. I pointed out that I was probably a little too old for him. He responded and called me an ageist and offered to forward a copy of my talk to me. I explained I didn't feel I was being an ageist, but that there was an additional power dynamic which made me uncomfortable. He's a student at the university where I teach. Additionally, I can't commit or invest in anyone right now. He responded and kept

pushing the matter, this time with increased sexual innuendo and demands. However, no means no, and I grew uncomfortable. I didn't owe him an explanation to begin with. He asked me out, fair play. But when I said no, this somehow didn't register or else seemed insufficiently valid. I felt like my speech was being used against me, to bully me into saying yes.

What disappoints me the most is that this isn't an unfamiliar story, for me or for any of my friends. The only time I have said no and had someone back down without further pushing or without lashing out at me, is when I have made it clear that I am dating someone. The rhetoric is that it is only acceptable that I turn someone down if I am off the market. That if I am single, it is open season and I better say yes. If I don't, this reflects negatively on me somehow. How is this ok?

I have the right to say no, and to have this right respected, just as you do. Being good to each other also means recognizing boundaries and respecting them. Instead of prodding these boundaries and trying to gage how firm they are, and when they don't budge trying to suss out why I have placed them there, how about just taking it from there and moving forward? Somehow this does not occur. Somehow it is acceptable that you push me, that you bully me and that you assume I am up for grabs.

Going to the pro-equality demonstration, speaking there, and the aftermath, reminded me: I have a voice. And I am going to use it. No means no.

# SARAH J STANLEY

***Anna Hodgart talks to the artist and musician ahead of the launch of her first graphic novel 'Stealing Stuff and Putting it Back Again'.***

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**Can you introduce yourself to our readers and tell us a little about your work and background to date?**

I'm Sarah J Stanley, an artist and musician based in Glasgow and I suppose I would describe my work and background to date as, scraping by trying to sustain the time and sanity to keep making art. I've been working as an artist professionally for almost 10 years now after leaving Gray's School of Art with my BA(hons) in fine art. Also, I've been banging on at music much the same way, with very little ambition for greatness but not being able to leave it alone for the life of me. I mainly paint but drawing and some illustration (when it makes a buck) are also part of my work. To say I exhibit internationally is accurate, but sounds more prestigious than it is. Art is a slow as hell growing career, harrowing and pretty thankless. I'm giving it until age 80 to really have made something of myself, which I think is realistic. I often think I had all my best ideas from ages 0-5 and I imagine it might take until I'm about 80 to outwork them…

**Stealing Stuff and Putting it Back Again is your first graphic novel but not your first book. Can you tell us a little about your writing to date and what's now drawn you to work in a graphic novel medium?**

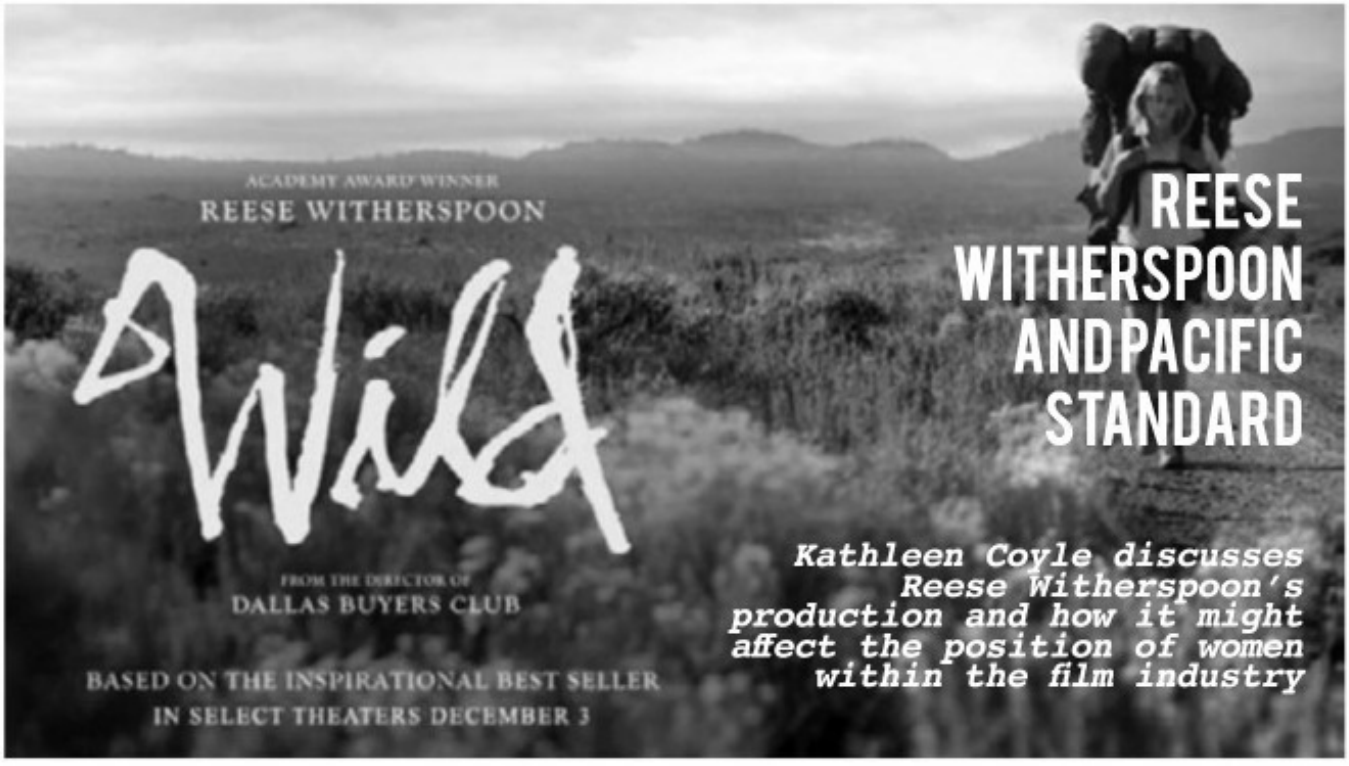
I have never considered myself a good writer in a conventional sense, but I use a lot of text in my artwork and I seem to write a lot anyway. I think it's important to use words that are something you do want to say, not just indulge in text for the sake of it. When writing songs I often want to say certain words because they feel like the right sort of sound I want to make with my voice, but I would never let a song complete itself if I didn't feel like the words came together intellectually, even just to me; always just to me. Other times I have one sentiment I really want to say out loud and songs are a catchy format, often more suiting than art, it's more immediate. In the case of this exploration I suppose you could call it, the format of a graphic story suited really well. I started it knowing it might not be the right format and I would have scrapped it but on this occasion, I got lucky. A piece only escapes the bin if it works I have that sort of 'yes' feeling about it.

**The novel focuses on the interior life of a 'non-gendered' protagonist, with the reader given an insight into their mind as they navigate and encounter the world around them... How much have you drawn on real experiences and people and how much is totally imagined or surreal?**

I find character making uncomfortable. I hate when people name inanimate objects like guitars or cars. I don't like to draw an unfamiliar face - it makes me feel weird. So I wanted to get familiar with a face so I could convince myself maybe I could. It seems like someone who claims to make a book should be able to do. Naming, describing or fleshing out the character holds no interest for me at all, I feel like I did ok just getting the creepy face down pat. I couldn't care less about them other than the way I draw their face and what their mind and hands get up to.

I used this character from the book in an animated music video recently called 'The Dreamer'. That song has a lot of reference to the story and aesthetic, not that anyone would be troll enough to bother to find out. For me it felt sort of 'complete' that way. I felt the character deserved it. Actually in the video the character IS me as well. I think it's an obvious reference that I relate to the character I made. The song speaks to the character, and to me. I'm always surrounding myself with words that assure me of certain things be it in my shit tattoos, or songs or artwork. I feel like I need the direction HARD and no one else would know how to as well. I'm faking this career out of it too.

***THIS IS AN EXCERPT. TO READ THE FULL ARTICLE, VISIT TYCI.ORG.UK. SARAH'S BOOK LAUNCH TAKES PLACE AT STAN'S (43 ALEXANDRA PARK STREE, GLASGOW, G31 2UB) ON SATURDAY 30 MAY. FOR MORE INFORMATION, HEAD TO SARAHJSTANLEY.COM.***




# REESE WITHERSPOON AND PACIFIC STANDARD

***Kathleen Coyle discusses Reese Witherspoon's production and how it might affect the position of women within the film industry***

For too long, stories that represent women leading realistic and complicated lives have gone untold in Hollywood. They have been minimised in favour of cleaner roles that ignore the more serious issues that can affect women throughout their lives. After a series of top-level meetings where it was clear that complex, multi-layered roles were not being developed for women, Reese Witherspoon took matters into her hands.

In 2012 she launched Pacific Standard production company alongside Australian movie producer Bruna Papandrea. The goal was to make movies that sought to create multi-faceted female characters, complete with the flaws that make us intrinsically human. Witherspoon voiced the quiet frustration that many female actors felt: that Hollywood was airbrushing women not just in terms of the physical ideal, but in terms of their personality too.

Anastacia Steele, of Fifty Shades of Grey, is one such example. Far from having an intriguing life the audience might be interested in, Christian Grey brings excitement into her otherwise dull life. Cinderella, played by Lily James, is another example of a decision to remain cozily inside the gender stereotype. In a recent episode of The Jonathan Ross Show Lily James was asked, "The moment where you kiss Prince Charming, that has to be a special moment. Do you rehearse that in advance?"

At that moment James was seated next to Russell Crowe who was promoting his

movie The Water Divined, on general release now. Ross asked Crowe in-depth questions in relation to the role and this makes sense - how can you ask interesting questions in relation to a female character whose mortal goal is to marry Prince Charming? When most of Hollywood conforms to the stereotype, this is the result.

Topically, Crowe recently came under fire for comments criticising middle-aged female actors who wanted to be cast as "the twenty one year old". What Crow failed to recognise is that for the most part, compelling roles for older women don't exist. In effect, the industry is telling women over a certain age that they are no longer valuable, that their talents wither in line with their appearance. This is the reason why the launch of Pacific Standard, a production company dedicated to promoting women during various ages of their lives, is so important.

Described by Forbes as "one of the most feminist films of the year", Pacific Standard's first project was Gone Girl. Carrie Coon, Kim Dickens and Lisa Baines all play characters that break the gender stereotypes that are often seen.

The second project was Wild, based on the book of the same name by author Cheryl Strayed. After enduring two major traumas in her life, Cheryl embarked on a physical and spiritual journey when she hiked the Pacific West Trail. The movie adaptation explores many of the topics that Reese believed Hollywood producers were shying away from (sex and drugs, to name a couple). The old adage about the book being better than the movie is usually true; but here, I was so invested in the complexities of the character during both mediums that it was difficult to separate my feelings for each one. Here, Witherspoon and Papandrea have reflected the journey that the courageous Cheryl Strayed took and told Hollywood in no uncertain terms: real women's lives matter. The complex life a woman can lead will be amongst the most compelling stories that can be told. As such, they deserve to have their movies made and for those efforts to be reflected in the industry.

Attending the Oscars 2015, Witherspoon was also a driving force for the #AskHerMore campaign. The main focus on women at the Oscars is rarely about their talents and always what they are wearing. But in order to create a platform where journalists can ask more interesting questions, the roles that women are offered have to become more consistently gripping. It's not going to be an easy battle: all women who believe in equal rights of women within the arts and in general will have to fight to make this happen - but the groundwork laid by Reese Witherspoon gives me hope that we will get there in the end.

# YOU LIVE, YOU LEARN: WHERE THE FEMINISTS WORSHIP

***Kate Bailey writes the latest article in our special education series, this time looking at the idea of "college feminism".***

This time we're taking a slight detour in our discussion of feminism and education. There has been some recent discussion about the feminist communities of tertiary education, specifically the dismissal of a 'college feminist' and the assumption of instantaneous extreme leanings in regards to gender. More on this later, but for now, a question: how is feminism and gender studies, and the communities they create, detrimental to equality? Under the assumption knowledge and education is personal empowerment and tertiary education is a good thing - how can examining the role an entire gender has played in the world - past and present, be a bad thing? If overwhelmingly large groups of people are unifying after being privy to the facts of women and their struggles through history and today, then maybe this is democracy in action? For, we only see change when enough people say we have to and this has been the course of most human rights movements. So, maybe this tertiary education is one of the places people can develop an intellectual grasp of gender and the role it has in society.

Hopefully you have seen Melissa McGrath's TED Talk about feminism? In response, a website called PJ Lifestyle offered up common, misogynistic rhetoric:

"Pulling all the approved *contemporary feminist buzzwords from 'white privilege' to 'rape culture', McGrath weaves the kind of soap box narrative trademarked by the best faith-based snake oil salesmen (and women) of the 20th century. Her's is a speech proving that feminism isn't just ideology, but idolatry; a religion whose places of worship are in*

*university classrooms, whose holy texts are available at your nearest bookstore, and whose icons live on 'Pinterest boards" and social media outlets'."*

These kinds of statements are interesting. In many ways, they acknowledge things that are very relevant to feminism - important discussions; but offer a misinterpretation that seems, well, hateful. If we're to believe there's some good in humanity, we should assume that these types of sentiments are a product of ignorance and a lack of awareness, as opposed to some true hatred.. That said, we can take these ideas apart. Shall we?

1) Feminism exposes the social injustice and prejudice towards women, and that informs the identification of someone who believes men and women should be equal. 'White Privilege' and 'Rape Culture' are buzzwords of feminism and they exist and are used because based on overwhelming evidence, we have a society that provides privilege to white people and is fighting an epidemic of men raping women, and a legal system failing to cope with it.

2) Feminism and gender studies are subjects offered to reflect upon history and our current social structures, in the same way as race rights or the studies of atrocities towards marginalised peoples are.

3) Feminism does become important to many people who study it - many have never been able to study it before. Education is of patriarchy, and in patriarchy, the voices of women are marginalised. Most who formally study feminism have never been exposed to the casual and intricate ways gender inequality simmers below a barely functioning society, so their education becomes a revelation about many of the oppressions of the patriarchy and what that means for all humans, not just women.

4) Social media has played a vital role in the resurgence of feminism. Social media is powerful, like it or not it is a fact. It facilitated the Arab Spring, brought us the truth about Ferguson, or melts when a member of One Direction quits. Like it or not, social media is used by a majority of Westerners to communicate privately and publicly and further to that, we use a digital filing system to converse specifically and directly about topics. If feminism is popular digitally, and people are using digital platforms to discuss it, isn't that simply people utilising modern technology to gain knowledge, engage in discussions and perpetuate a movement they have decided is personal to them.

5) Feminism is personal, to everyone who believes in it... Feminism is about saying no to the tangible oppression of woman. It's a simple formula: if a woman does not get A but a man in entitled to it, there's a lack of equality. Would a human possess such apathy to ignore access to certain basic rights and unattainable privilege, even if not for others, but for themselves?

***THIS IS AN EXCERPT. TO READ THE FULL ARTICLE AND MORE IN THE YOU LIVE, YOU LEARN SERIES, VISIT TYCI.ORG.UK. FOR MORE OF KATE'S WORK, HEAD TO LITTLEJOY.DE.***

# HANNAH COHEN

***Hannah Gifford speaks to the New York musician about her latest LP, 'Pleasure Boy'.***

**For TYCI readers who don't know about you yet, how would you describe your sound?**

I still don't really know what to call it. Recently someone coined it as "torch pop" and I like the sound of that.

**Tell us a bit about your songwriting process.**

I usually wake up pretty early in the morning and space out for a few hours playing the guitar. I sort of gloss over and at some point I'll play something I like and I'll start singing a melody or a phrase and then a song will start to take shape. Usually it will take me a few days to write but if it hasn't been finished in a few days I won't work on that song anymore. Trying to write on piano now...

**Are there are recurring themes in your music? Lyrically, what inspires you?**

The past two records were about loving someone, secrets and heartbreak. I hope to change that theme on the next one. Trying to lighten up a bit...

**And musically, who would you say are your influences?**

At the moment Robert Wyatt. Sea Song has been on repeat for weeks on end. I never get sick of it.

**Where and when did you make**

**your record? What can you tell us about that process?**

It took a year to make Pleasure Boy. We recorded it at my friend/engineer Pat Dillett's studio in Midtown. He had a busy schedule with other sessions so we would only get 1 studio session a month sometimes. It made it difficult to get into a groove sometimes with recording but also gave me time to get space from it and breathe.

**What was it like working with Thomas Bartlett? At Why was he someone you were keen to work with?**

We had made my first record together and I felt that Thomas understood where I wanted to go next sonically... which was very far away form the first record.
Thomas and I had been very close friends for the past 5 years, almost inseparable at times. Making music together was challenging because we were so close, things would get very personal... It was excruciating but I'm happy we made it together.

**How have your life changed since the release of Child Bride in 2012 and Pleasure Boy?**

I have become even more obsessed with cats.

**What are your hopes or goals for this album cycle?**

I just want to get out there and play. I would love to tour as much as possible.

**Was music something you always wanted to do? How did you get into it in the first place?**

I moved to New York at 17 and I had a boyfriend who was a musician and there as always a guitar laying around. He would be on tour a lot and while he was away I taught myself how to play guitar.

**What are your upcoming plans for the rest of the year?**

Hopefully writing new music.

**What advice would you give to other women in the arts?**

If you're collaborating with someone, establish your terms at the beginning of working together.

**And finally, what new artist would you say that TYCI readers need to go listen to right away?**

I don't really listen to new music. I would tell TYCI readers to listen to a new age record released in 1977 called The Golden Voyage - Volume 1 by Robert Bearns and Ron Dexter. Last summer I fell in love to this record.

***FOR MORE ON HANNAH'S WORK, VISIT HANNAHCOHENMUSIC.COM.***

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**The latest episode of the TYCI podcast is online now and can be found at soundcloud.com/tyciblog. Our next Subcity show will be Thursday 28 May, 5 – 7pm. Tune in at subcity.org/shows/tyci.**

**TYCI is a collective run by women.**

**We have a website where we write about things which affect us and put together features on art, theatre, music, film, politics,current affairs and most things in between. We also talk about similar stuff on our monthly podcasts and radio show on Subcity.**

**This zine is a collection of some of the content from our site and is distributed in conjunction with our monthly live events.**

**If you would like to get involved, reply to any of our articles or just generally say hi, hit us up on contact.tyci@gmail.com or visit tyci.org.uk.**

EDITED BY LAUREN MAYBERRY ///
EVERYTHING ELSE BY CECILIA STAMP (CECILIASTAMP.CO.UK)